LGBT community

The **LGBT community** or **GLBT community**, also referred to as the **gay community**, is a loosely defined grouping of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, LGBT organizations, and subcultures, united by a common culture and social movements. These communities generally celebrate pride, diversity, individuality, and sexuality. LGBT activists and sociologists see LGBT community-building as a counterbalance to heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, sexualism, and conformist pressures that exist in the larger society. The term *pride* or sometimes *gay pride* is used to express the LGBT community's identity and collective strength; pride parades provide both a prime example of the use and a demonstration of the general meaning of the term. The LGBT community is diverse inpolitical affiliation. Not all people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender consider themselves part of the LGBT community.

Groups that may be considered part of the LGBT community include gay villages, LGBT rights organizations, LGBT employee groups at companies, LGBT student groups in schools and universities, and LGBT-affirming religious groups.

LGBT communities may organize themselves into, or support, movements for civil rights promoting LGBT rights in various places around the world.

LGBT community

The Stonewall Inn in the gay village of Greenwich Village, Manhattan, site of the June 1969 Stonewall riots, the cradle of the modern LGBT rights movement, is adorned with flags depicting the colors of the rainbow.[1][2][3]

LGBTQ people

Total population
c. 250 million[a] (Estimated worldwide)

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Symbols

The gay community is frequently associated with certain symbols; especially the rainbow or rainbow flags. The Greek lambda symbol ("L" for liberation), triangles, ribbons, and gender symbols are also used as "gay acceptance" symbol. There are many types of flags to represent subdivisions in the gay community, but the most commonly recognized one is the rainbow flag. According to Gilbert Baker, creator of the commonly known rainbow flag, each color represents a value in the community:

- pink = sexuality
- red = life
- orange = healing
- yellow = the sun
- green = nature
- blue = art
- indigo = harmony
- violet = spirit

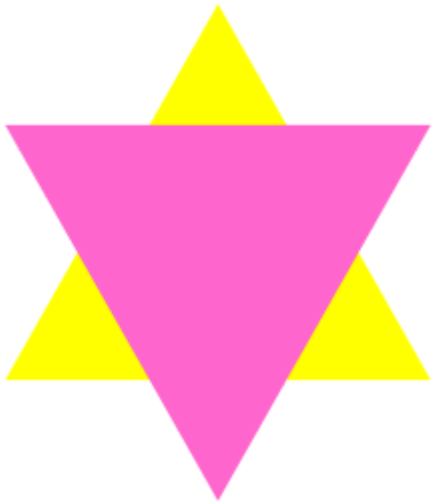
Later, pink and indigo were removed from the flag, resulting in the present-day flag which was first presented at the 1979 Pride Parade. Other flags include the Victory over AIDS flag, Leather Pride flag, and Bear Pride flag.[5]

Congresswoman Pelosi at the Friends of the Pink Triangle Ceremony

The lambda symbol was originally adopted by Gay Activists Alliance of New York in 1970 after they broke away from the larger Gay Liberation Front. Lambda was chosen because people might confuse it for a college symbol and not recognize it as a gay community symbol unless one was actually involved in the community. "Back in December of 1974, the lambda was officially declared the international symbol for gay and lesbian rights by the International Gay Rights Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland."[5]

The triangle became a symbol for the gay community after the Holocaust. Not only did it represent Jews, but homosexuals who were killed because of German law. During the Holocaust, homosexuals were labeled with pink triangles to distinguish between them, Jews, regular prisoners, and political prisoners. The black triangle is similarly a symbol for females only to represent lesbian sisterhood.

The pink and yellow triangle was used to label Jewish homosexuals. Gender symbols have a much longer list of variations of homosexual or bisexual relationships which are clearly recognizable but may not be as popularly seen as the other symbols. Other symbols that relate to the gay community or gay pride include the gay-teen suicide awareness ribbon, AIDS awareness ribbon, labrys, and purple rhinoceros.



Pink and yellow triangles were utilized to label Jewish homosexuals during the Holocaust.

In the fall of 1995, the Human Rights Campaign adopted a logo (yellow equal sign on deep blue square) that has become one of the most recognizable symbols of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community The logo can be spotted the world over and has become synonymous with the fight for equal rights for LGBT people.

One of the most notable recent changes was made in Philadelphia, PA on June 8, 2017. They added two new stripes to the traditional LGBT+ flag, one black and one brown. These were intended to highlight members of color within the LGBTQIA community.[6]

Human and legal rights

The LGBT community represented by a social component of the global community that is believed by many, including heterosexual allies, to be underrepresented in the area of civil rights. The current struggle of the gay community has been largely brought about by globalization. In the United States, World War II brought together many closeted rural men from around the nation and exposed them to more progressive attitudes in parts of Europe. Upon returning home after the war, many of these men decided to band together in cities rather than return to their small towns. Fledgling communities would soon become political in the beginning of the gay rights movement, including monumental incidents at places like Stonewall. Today, many large cities have gay and lesbian community centers. Many universities and colleges across the world have support centers for LGBT students. The Human Rights Campaign,[7] Lambda Legal, the Empowering Spirits Foundation,[8] and GLAAD[9] advocate for LGBT people on a wide range of issues in the United States. There is also an International Lesbian and Gay Association. In 1947, when the United Kingdom adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), LGBT activists clung to its concept of equal, inalienable rights for all people, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation. The declaration does not specifically mention gay rights, but discusses equality and freedom from discrimination.[10] In 1962, Clark Polak joined The Janus Society in Philadelphia, PA.[11] Only a year after, he became president. In 1968, he announced that the Society would be changing their name to Homosexual Law Reform Society; "Homosexuals are now willing to fly under their own colors" (Stewart, 1968).

Evan Wolfson of Freedom to Marry argued before the Supreme Court in *Boy Scouts of America v Dale*.

Same-sex marriage

In parts of the world, partnership rights or marriage have been extended to same-sex couples. Advocates of same-sex marriage cite a range of benefits that are denied to people who cannot marry, including immigration, health care, inheritance and property rights, and other family obligations and protections, as reasons why marriage should be extended to same-sex couples. Opponents of same-sex marriage within the gay community argue that fighting to achieve these benefits by means of extending marriage rights to same-sex couples privatizes benefits (e.g., health care) that should be made available to people regardless of their relationship status. They further argue that the same-sex marriage movement within the gay community discriminates against families that are composed of three or more intimate partners. Opposition to the same-sex marriage movement from within the gay community should not be confused with opposition from outside that community

The headquarters of theHuman Rights Campaign, one of the largest gay rights organizations in the United States

Media

The contemporary lesbian and gay community has a growing and complex place in the American & Western European media. Lesbians and gay men are often portrayed inaccurately in television, films, and other media. The gay community is often portrayed as many stereotypes, such as gay men being portrayed as flamboyant and bold. Like other minority groups, these caricatures are intended to ridicule this maginalized group.[12]

There is currently a widespread ban of references in child-related entertainment, and when references do occur, they almost invariably generate controversy. In 1997, when American comedian Ellen DeGeneres came out of the closet on her popular sitcom, many sponsors, such as the Wendy's fast food chain, pulled their advertising.[13] Also, a portion of the media has attempted to make the gay community included and publicly accepted with television shows such as *Will & Grace* or *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. This increased publicity reflects the Coming out movement of the LGBT community. As more celebrities came out, more shows

developed, such as the 2004 show *The L Word*. These depictions of the LGBT community have been controversial, but beneficial for the community. The increase in visibility of LGBT people allowed for the LGBT community to unite to organize and demand change, and it has also inspired many LGBT people to come out.[14]

In the United States, gay people are frequently used as a symbol of social decadence by celebrity evangelists and by organizations such as Focus on the Family. Many LGBT organizations exist to represent and defend the gay community. For example, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation in the United States and Stonewall in the UK work with the media to help portray fair and accurate images of the gay community

As companies are advertising more and more to the gay community, LGBT activists are using ad slogans to promote gay community views. Subaru marketed its Forester and Outback with the slogan "It's Not a Choice. It's the Way We're Built", which was later used in eight U.S. cities on streets or in gay rights events.[15]

Buying power

According to Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. and Marketresearch.com, the 2006 buying power of U.S. gays and lesbians was approximately $660 billion and was then expected to exceed $835 billion by 2011.[16] Headlines later stated "Gay Buying Power to hit $2 trillion by 2012".[17] Gay consumers can be very loyal to specific brands, wishing to support companies that support the gay community and also provide equal rights for LGBT workers. In the UK, this buying power is sometimes abbreviated to "the pink pound". More and more Fortune 500 companies are embracing LGBT/gay community consumers to include "domestic partner benefits, non-discrimination policies, and financial support for organizations working to promote equality".[17]

According to an article by James Hipps, LGBT Americans are more likely to seek out companies that advertise to them and are willing to pay higher prices for premium products and services. This can be attributed to the median household income compared from same-sex couples to opposite-sex couples. "...studies show that GLBT Americans are twice as likely to have graduated from college, twice as likely to have an individual income over $60,000 and twice as likely to have a household income of $250,000 or more."[18]

Consumerism

Although many claim that the LGBT community is more affluent when compared to heterosexual consumers, research has proved that false.[19] However, the LGBT community is still an important segment of consumer demographics because of the spending power and loyalty to brands that they have.[20] Witeck-Combs Communications calculated the adult LGBT buying power at $830 billion for 2013.[19] Same-sex partnered households spend slightly more than the average household on any given shopping trip.[21] But, they also make more shopping trips compared to non-LGBT households.[21] On average, the difference in spending with same-sex partnered households is 25% higher than the average U.S. household.[21] According to the University of Maryland gay male partners earn $10,000 less on average compared to heterosexual men.[19] However, partnered lesbians receive about $7,000 more a year than heterosexual married women.[19] Hence, same-sex partners and heterosexual partners are about equal with respect to consumer affluence.[19]

The LGBT community has been recognized for being one of the largest consumers in travel. Travel includes annual trips, and sometimes even multiple annual trips. Annually, the LGBT community spends around $65 billion on travel, totaling to 10% of the U.S. travel market.[19] Many common travel factors play into LGBT travel decisions, but if there is a destination that is especially tailored to the LGBT community then they are more likely to travel to those places.[19]

Demographics

In a survey conducted in 2012, younger Americans are more likely to identify as LGBT.[21] Statistics continue to decrease with age, as adults between ages 18–29 are three times more likely to identify as LGBT than seniors older than 65.[21] These statistics for the LGBT community are taken into account just as they are with other demographics, in order to find trend patterns for specific

products.[19] Consumers who identify as LGBT are more likely to regularly engage in various activities as opposed to those who identify as heterosexual.[19] According to Community Marketing, Inc., 90% of lesbians and 88% of gay men will dine out with friends regularly. And similarly, 31% of lesbians and 50% of gay men will visit a club or a bar.[19]

And at home, the likelihood of LGBT women having children at home as non-LGBT women is equal.[21] However, LGBT men are half as likely when compared with non-LGBT men to have children at home.[21] Household incomes for sixteen percent of LGBT Americans ranges above $90,000 per year, in comparison with 21% of the overall adult population.[21] However, a key difference is that those who identify as LGBT have collectively fewer children in comparison to heterosexual partners.[19] Another factor at hand, is that LGBT populations of color continue to face income barriers along with the rest of the race issues, so they will expectedly earn less and not be as affluent as predicted.[19]

An analysis of a Gallup survey shows detailed estimates that - during the years 2012 through 2014 - the metropolitan area with the highest percentage of LGBT community is San Francisco, CA. The next highest are Portland, OR, and Austin, TX.[22]

Marketing

Marketing towards the LGBT community was not always a strategy among advertisers. Over the course of the last three to four decades, Corporate America has created a market niche for the LGBT community. Three distinct phases define the marketing turnover: 1) shunning in the 1980s, 2) curiosity and fear in the 1990s, and 3) pursuit in the 2000s.[23]

Just recently, marketers have picked up the LGBT demographic. With a spike in same-sex marriage in 2014, marketers are figuring out new ways to tie in a person's sexual orientation to a product being sold.[21] In efforts to attract members of the LGBT community to their products, market researchers are developing marketing methods that reach these new families.[21] Advertising history has shown that when marketing to the family, it was always the wife, the husband, and the children.[21] But today, that is not necessarily the case. There could be families of two fathers or two mothers with one child or six children. Breaking away from the traditional family setting, marketing researchers notice the need to recognize these different family configurations.[21]

One area that marketers are subject to fall under is stereotyping the LGBT community. When marketing towards the community, they may corner their target audience into an "alternative" lifestyle category that ultimately "others" the LGBT community.[21] Sensitivity is of importance when marketing towards the community. When marketing towards the LGBT community, advertisers respect the same boundaries.

Marketers also refer to LGBT as a single characteristic that makes an individual.[21] There are other areas that can be targeted along with the LGBT segment such as race, age, culture, and income levels.[21] Having knowledge of the consumer gives these marketers power.

Along with attempts to engage with the LGBT community, researchers have found gender disagreements among products with respective consumers.[23] For instance, a gay male may want a more feminine product, whereas a lesbian female may be interested in a more masculine product. This does not hold true for the entire LGBT community, but the possibilities of these differences are far greater.[23] In the past, gender was seen as fixed, and a congruent representation of an individual's sex. It is understood now that there is fluidity among sex and gender separately. Researchers also noted that when evaluating products, a person's biological sex is as equal of a determinant as his or her own self-concept.[23] As a customer response, when the advertisement is directed towards them, gay men and women are more likely to have interest in the product.[20] This is an important factor and goal for marketers because it indicates future loyalty to the product or brand.[20]

Health

Discrimination and mental health

In a 2001 study that examined possible root causes of mental disorders in lesbian, gay and bisexual people, Cochran and psychologist Vickie M. Mays, of the University of California, explored whether ongoing discrimination fuels anxiety, depression and other stress-related mental health problems among LGB people.[24] The authors found strong evidence of a relationship between the two.[24] The team compared how 74 LGB and 2,844 heterosexual respondents rated lifetime and daily experiences with discrimination such as not being hired for a job or being denied a bank loan, as well as feelings of perceived discrimination.[24] LGB respondents reported higher rates of perceived discrimination than heterosexuals in every category related to discrimination, the team found.[24] However, while gay youth are considered to be at higher risk for suicide, a literature review published in the journal *Adolescence* states, "Being gay in-and-of-itself is not the cause of the increase in suicide." Rather the review notes that the findings of previous studies suggested the,"...suicide attempts were significantly associated with psychosocial stressors, including gender nonconformity, early awareness of being gay, victimization, lack of support, school dropout, family problems, acquaintances' suicide attempts, homelessness, substance abuse, and other psychiatric disorders. Some of these stressors are also experienced by heterosexual adolescents, but they have been shown to be more prevalent among gay adolescents."[25]

LGBT multiculturalism

General

LGBT multiculturalism is the diversity within the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community as a representation of different sexual orientations, gender identities—as well as different ethnic, language, religious groups within the LGBT community. At the same time as LGBT and multiculturalism relation, we may consider the inclusion of LGBT community into a larger multicultural model, as for example in universities,[26] such multicultural model includes the LGBT community together and equal representation with other large minority groups such as African Americans in the United States.

The two movements have much in common politically. Both are concerned with tolerance for real differences, diversity, minority status, and the invalidity of value judgments applied to different ways of life.[27][28]

Researchers have identified the emergence of gay and lesbian communities during several progressive time periods across the world including: the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and modern Westernization.[29] Depending on geographic location, some of these communities experienced more opposition to their existence than others; nonetheless, they began to permeate society both socially and politically.[29]

European cities past and present

City spaces in Early Modern Europe were host to a wealth of gay activity; however, these scenes remained semi-secretive for a long period of time.[29] Dating back to the 1500s, city conditions such as apprenticeship labor relations and living arrangements, abundant student and artist activity, and hegemonic norms surrounding female societal status were typical in Venice and Florence, Italy.[29] Under these circumstances, many open minded young people were attracted to these city settings.[29] Consequently, an abundance of same-sex interactions began to take place.[29] Many of the connections formed then often led to the occurrence of casual romantic and sexual relationships, the prevalence of which increased quite rapidly over time until a point at which they became a subculture and community of their own.[29]

Since the 1700s, Paris has been known as a gay capital.[29] Literature and ballroom culture gradually made their way onto the scene and became integrated despite transgressive societal views.[29] Perhaps the most well-known of these are the balls of Magic-City. Amsterdam and London have also been recognized as leading locations for LGBT community establishment.[29] By the 1950s, these urban spaces were booming with gay venues such as bars and public saunas where community members could come together.[29] Paris and London were particularly attracting to the lesbian population as platforms for not only socialization, but education as well.[29] A few other urban occasions that are important to the LGBT community include Carnival in Rio de Jeneiro, Brazil, Mardi Gras in Sydney, Australia, as well as the various other pride parades hosted in bigger cities around the world.[29]

Urban spaces in America

In the same way in which LGBT people used the city backdrop to join together socially, they were able to join forces politically as well. This new sense of collectivity provided somewhat of a safety net for individuals when voicing their demands for equal rights.[30] In the United States specifically, several key political events have taken place in urban contexts. Some of these include, but are not limited to:

Independence Hall, Philadelphia – gay and lesbian protest movement in 1965

- Activists led by Barbara Gittings started some of the first picket lines here. These protests continued on and off until 1969.[31] Gittings went on to run the Gay and Lesbian Task Force of the American Library Association for 15 years.[32]

The Stonewall Inn, New York City - birthplace of the modern gay rights movement in 1969

- For the first time, a group of gay men and drag queens fought back against police during a raid on this small bar in Greenwich Village. The place is now a national historic landmark.[31]

Castro Street, San Francisco - mecca for LGBTQ folks since the 1970s

- Almost of equal importance as Christopher Street (site of Stonewall Riot) when it comes to historic landmarks, this urban spot was an oasis of hopefulness. Home to the first openly gay elected official Harvey Milk and the legendary Castro Theater, this cityscape remains iconic to the LGBT community.[31]

Cambridge City Hall, Massachusetts – site of the first same-sex marriage in U.S. history in 2004

- In the years following this event, attempts by religious groups in the area to ban it have been stifled and many more states have joined the Commonwealth.[31]

AIDs Activities Coordinating Office, Philadelphia – an office to help stop the spread of HIV/AIDs

- An office that's goal is to provide proper administrative components, direct assistance, and education on HIV/AIDs.[33]

During and following these events, LGBT community subculture began to grow and stabilize into a nationwide phenomenon.[34] Gay bars became more and more popular in large cities.[34] For gays particularly, increasing numbers of cruising areas, public bath houses, and YMCAs in these urban spaces continued to welcome them to experience a more liberated way of living.[34] For lesbians, this led to the formation of literary societies, private social clubs, and same-sex housing.[34] The core of this community-building took place in New York City and San Francisco, but cities like St. Louis, Lafayette Park in WA, and Chicago quickly followed suit.[34]

City

Cities afford a host of prime conditions that allow for better individual development as well as collective movement that are not otherwise available in rural spaces.[30] First and foremost, urban landscapes offer LGBTs better prospects to meet other LGBTs and form networks and relationships.[30] One ideal platform within this framework was the free labor market of many capitalistic societies which enticed people to break away from their often damaging traditional nuclear families in order to pursue employment in bigger cities.[34] Making the move to these spaces afforded them new liberty in the realms of sexuality, identity, and also kinship.[30] Some researchers describe this as a phase of resistance against the confining expectations of normativity.[30] Urban LGBTs demonstrated this push back through various outlets including their style of dress, the way they talked and carried themselves, and how they chose to build community.[30] From a social science perspective, the relationship between the city and LGBT community is not a one-way street. LGBTs give back as much, if not more, in terms of economic contributions (i.e. "pink money"), activism and politics too.[29]

See also

- Bisexual community
- Gay friendly

- LGBT culture
- Gay male culture
- Lesbian
- LGBT history
- LGBT symbols
- List of gay villages
- Sexuality and gender identity-based cultures
- Transgender

Notes

a. Estimate is based on Williams Institute report on US population, extrapolated to global population.[4]

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Further reading

- Murphy, Timothy F., *Reader's Guide to Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 2000. (African American LGBT community and also its relation to art.) Partial view at Google Books

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